THE

FALL OF CHICAGO

BY

MRS. SOPHIA H. O[illegible]

AUTHORESS OF "THE WRITED SEPU[illegible]

SECOND EDITION.

CHICAGO, OCTOBER,
1871.

PUBLISHED IN AID OF THE FIRE SUFFERERS.

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A voice is ringing in the air,
A tale is trembling on the wire,
The people shout in wild despair:
"Chicago is on fire!"

From North to South, from East to West,
That cry is borne by rushing crowds—
Behold our beauteous city dressed
In smoke and fiery shrouds!

Our noble firemen flee from homes
To battle the contending foe,
'Mid wreaths of smoke and tottering domes
And faces blank with woe.

With straining arm and dauntless eye
To quench those fierce and raging fires
With more than mortal energy;
While back the crowd retires.

'Tis vain! these efforts all are lost;
For now the water sources fail,
While the mad flames, in fury tossed
By the terrific gale,

Proclaim: "Now, I am king! Submit!
'Tis folly to resist my sway:
I tread your glories 'neath my feet:
I triumph here to-day!"

Ah! then and there the people flee
In furious haste their lives to save,
Yet hundreds find eternity
In one vast, swelt'ring grave.

The frantic mother's tearless eye
Sought in vain her children dear,
And fathers, pale with agony,
Shiver with mortal fear.

And friends and lovers linger 'round,
But vainly [illegible] stifled breath,
Hoping some dear one may be found
Near that sad field of death.

The surging crowds by thousands press
On, onward towards that sea of fire
Shrieking in tones of wild distress
Then hence again retire.

The wooden flames in fury rise,
Mounting the fierce tornadoes driven
Still higher reaching to the skies,
And hide the stars of heaven.

The [illegible] earth is scorched and dry:
[illegible] in burning pain
[illegible] straining eye
[illegible] Rain! Rain!! Rain!!!

[illegible]
[illegible] earth and heaven:
[illegible] humble and proud,
[illegible] heaven

[illegible] his face
[illegible]—
[illegible] grace—
[illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] treasures gone
[illegible] low.

Listen! [illegible] fearful sound?
"The [illegible] House is on fire!" Its bell
Has rung out its last chime around
The awful tale to tell.

The prisoner in his gloomy cell
Of shame and sorrow, guilt and woe,
Learns in this awful hour too well
The fruits of crime to know.

A hundred voices from the cell
Yell from their Iron-grated door
"We perish in these flames of hell!
Save, save us, we implore!"

And some are freed, some die in fire,
And find their graves and coffins here:
Amid those burning embers dire,
They gasp out life's last prayer.

Hark! yet another thrilling wail
Shrieks madly through the lurid air,
The cupola has fallen! The gale
Echoes the wild despair.

The votaries mad of Fashion now
Who dared to waste life's precious hours
In guilty idleness, must bow
To these all-conquering powers.

The house of her whose gate is hell
Like others, in blank ruin lies
Where once tolled Virtue's [illegible]
Now scorching flames arise.

Her burning voice is hushed in death,
Forever closed her wanton eyes,
She's breathed out her last poison breath,
And spoken her last lies.

The wine cup sparkles here no more;
Its rivers to that sea of fire
Have added their own flaming store
To send it blazing higher.

And the poor drunkard hence must call
On other aids to quench his thirst;
With baser liquor sellers, all
Together doubly cursed.

The marble palace, splendid hall,
Hotel, bank, store, and princely dome,
In undistinguished ruin fall,
And find one common home.

The gathered stores of art refined,
Transported o'er the ocean wave,
The treasured wealth of cultured mind
Mingle in one sad grave.

Vast libraries and pictures here,
Paintings and statuary, all,
Ancient and new, soon disappear
'Neath one vast funeral pall.

Our Press—that wondrous power of yore—
Proclaims: "My errands here are done;
I battle for the right no more,
Nor wrong: My race is run."

Its leaden types are melted now,
Amid those fierce, contending tides,
Pale Desolation on its brow
Silent and sad presides.

Not one remains to tell the tale;
To spread the gloomy tidings 'round;
And bear with sad and solemn wail,
The melancholy sound.

O! weep, thou city of the dead!
O! wail, thou city of the past!
The crown is fallen from thy head
And thou art doomed at last.

Our city, once "Pride of the West,"
And wonder of the nations far,
The richest, brightest, loveliest, best,
Now, like a fallen star,

Lies low, in ashes doomed to weep.
Around its fierce and fiery bed
A thousand hearts their vigils keep
O'er the returnless dead.

The splendors of our golden age,
In unforgotten beauty dressed,
Vanish ere Autumn's ling'ring page
The "Rainbow of the West."

One morn the man of thousands gave
His last look o'er his hoarded pelf:
The next, his meanest, poorest slave
Rose richer than himself.

The wings of riches swiftly flew,
In fiery gulfs to end their flight;
And many a mad ambition, too,
Sank in eternal night.

But yesterday the millionaire
Could scorn to feel a brother's sorrow:
To-day he wears a brow of care,
And wails a sadder morrow.

With tearful eye each passer by
Reads MENE written on thy brow:
And in that bright and lurid sky
Beholds thy ruins now.

What need have we of preaching now?
Look on that pile and there behold!
Lessons stare from its ashen brow
Pulpits have never told.

The fallacy of selfish aims,
The madness of a wasted life,
The guilt of idleness, the claims
Of misery in the strife.

But shall we sit and idly rave,
Cry: "Woe is me, I am undone?"
Shall aspiration find its grave?
Nay! let us rouse, each one

These lessons urge us on to move,
To battle still the ills of life.
Our perseverance yet may prove
Us victors in the strife.

We'll gird our armour on anew,
Life still hath plenty, hope, and joy
For all who do each duty true.
Bravely Life's powers employ.

Let Industry our watchword be,
And Honesty our polar star,
And God our guide, and then shall we
Find riches from afar.

And higher treasures still above,
Which fire and flames cannot destroy.
Treasures of peace, of home, of love,
Of pure, immortal joy.

In future time there will be read,
From some celestial post of view:
"Chicago's burst her ashy bed;
Chicago's born anew."

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